

News & Announcements

Our First Issue!

Welcome to the first issue of our monthly newsletter for students and parents of students. We are very excited about the topics we have planned for upcoming newsletters and hope that this proves to be as useful a resource as we envision.

The Smart Connection will include practical tips and suggestions to support you in your learning. If you would like to suggest a topic for an upcoming newsletter, please contact us!

Final Exam Help

With less than two months to final exams, many students are being pro-active in preparing themselves for final exams through continuing to study, forming study groups, hiring a tutor to iron out those wrinkles in your comprehension.

▶ http://lahs.laschools.net/counseling/study_skills.shtml

lists and lists of tips

▶ http://www.almamater.edu.ru/publ/study_tips.htm

written for college level students

“Education has for its object the formation of character.”

Herbert Spencer (1820 - 1903)

The Four Stages of Learning

by Maureen Bouey

Do you ever get frustrated with yourself for not learning something quickly enough? Many people beat themselves up for not ‘getting it’ quickly enough. Please remember to be proud and supportive of yourself in every stage of your learning. Not only do we all have different learning styles, which means we learn things in our own unique and distinct ways, we also all learn new things in specific stages. So, regardless of what you are learning, there are invariably four distinct stages of learning .

1. Unconscious Incompetence: This is the first stage of learning, when you might not have the ‘skill’ or ‘knowledge’ you want to acquire, but it really doesn’t bother you either – and you certainly don’t feel bad about not knowing; after all, you haven’t tried yet! Are you with me? Think back to a time when you first learned to do something brand new - something that you now know how to do very well – without even ‘thinking’ about it. It could be riding a bike, playing a sport or learning to play a new game - but it should be something you can now do ‘with your eyes closed’. When you first begin to learn a new activity you:

‘don’t know what you don’t know.’

In other words, you don’t know what your problems are, and you don’t know how to identify them. But since you aren’t even aware of the fact that you don’t know ‘something’, this is not really an uncomfortable stage. In fact, it is sometimes referred to as ‘the stage of blissful ignorance’ before learning begins. At this stage, your self-esteem is well intact.

2. Conscious Incompetence: This is stage two, and now you do know what you don’t know. In fact, this awareness (of your lack of knowledge) is dominant in your mind. You are now quite conscious of what you don’t know, and you are all too aware that you are getting it wrong, but you don’t yet know how to get it right. Depending on what you are learning, there may be dozens, or even hundreds (as in driving a car) of small details to remember, and it is easy to become daunted at this stage. This is where self-esteem can suffer; where many people begin to feel quite unhappy with themselves, and with their progress. The bad feelings come from judgments like, ‘I’m not doing it right,’ ‘I’ll never get this,’ etc. Some of you may even quit at this stage because you feel so uncomfortable trying to do the activity and are acutely aware of your lack of knowledge. You can now clearly see a lot of your problems, but you don’t know how to correct them yet. You just feel like you

‘don’t know how to do it!’

Of course, in stage one you didn’t know how to do it either – but you hadn’t really attempted it, so...how could you know how to do it? It’s this stage, where the learning actually begins, where most of the judgments against ourselves are made, and where we may beat ourselves up a bit. Worst of all, some people just give up. Maslow talks about the importance of what he calls ‘judgment release’, in order to move on successfully.

3. Conscious Competence: The third stage of learning is when you are beginning to ‘get’ it; you can do the new thing, but only by really concentrating

About Us

Our Mission Is:

► To provide top quality, flexible learning support and service to students and parents of students through:

Superior private tutoring matched specifically to each student's needs *and* stimulating, small group classes.

► To enhance students' skills and increase their learning confidence through individualized support, recognizing each student's unique abilities.

► To improve quality of life, in individuals and communities through education.

Our tutors are certified teachers and professionals. All of our tutors are carefully screened.

We will help you to reach your goals, no matter your level.

For more information, and free study tips, visit us on-line at: www.SmartTutorReferrals.com

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and by very consciously focussing on doing all the right things. Although not always, for the most part, you are 'getting it'. You usually know how to correct any problems by yourself, even though you know it will still take some time and practice before you don't have to think about it at all. Still, now you feel like you

'pretty much know how to do this.'

This stage of learning is easier and more comfortable than the second stage, but you still feel awkward and self-conscious. It is not yet completely natural, and you still need to think about what to do next. You won't yet feel a sense of fluidity, or ease with the task. Positive feedback at this stage will very much reinforce your growing confidence, "Oh, do you really think I'm good at this?"

4. Unconscious Competence: This feels better. The fourth and final stage of learning a skill is when it has become a natural part of us. For instance, if what you have been trying to learn is how to play a musical instrument, you now play well - without even thinking about it.

You can now put your heart and soul into it because you no longer have to concentrate on where the notes are, or which notes make up a particular chord.

If you have been learning to ride a bike, you can now ride the bike down the street while steering, changing gears, checking for traffic, remaining aware of everything around you, and yet still able to enjoy the view and think about what you're going to do later. Now,

'you know what you need to know.'

This is the stage of dexterity and effortlessness. After enough practice at the activity, you get to the stage where you don't really think much about it at all, unless something alerts you back to it. For example, if you are riding your bike and a dog suddenly runs out into the road, your conscious awareness is re-triggered.

So the next time you start to feel bad about 'not doing it right', remember that making mistakes are critical steps in the learning process. Each stage takes time - how much time is different with everyone - but remember that as you practice, you are in the process of developing the skills you need to be "unconsciously competent". So be very kind to yourself in the beginning. When you're learning something new, remind yourself that you are progressing naturally, and exactly as you should. Keep it in perspective - you're doing great!

(1) Abraham Maslow's "Four Stages of Learning Theory"

Learning Styles Assessments

Understanding your learning style is understanding how you like to learn and express yourself. Knowing yourself as a learner, you can optimize your learning in the classroom and in life.

Smart Tutor Referrals uses an online Learning Styles Assessment tool developed by teachers and used by professionals for over 15 years. One great thing that many students really appreciate about this assessment is that the results are available immediately and can be printed off or emailed to another person (like a teacher, tutor, or parent, for example). The assessments are suitable for anyone over the age of 8 with an intermediate English level.

This assessment tool provides feedback on your: disposition, modality, optimum study environment, talents, and interests.

The cost is \$40. Please contact us for more information.